

Old Mandarin

Old Mandarin or **Early Mandarin** was the speech of northern China during the Jin and Yuan dynasties (12th to 14th centuries). New genres of vernacular literature were based on this language, including verse, drama and story forms, such as the *qu* and *sanqu*.

The phonology of Old Mandarin has been inferred from the 'Phags-pa script, an alphabet created in 1269 for several languages of the Mongol empire, including Chinese, and from two rime dictionaries, the *Menggu Ziyun* (1308) and the *Zhongyuan Yinyun* (1324). The rhyme books differ in some details but show many of the features characteristic of modern Mandarin dialects, such as the reduction and disappearance of final stops and the reorganization of the four tones of Middle Chinese.

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Name

The name "Mandarin", as a direct translation of the Chinese *Guānhuà* (官話, "language of the officials"), was initially applied to the lingua franca of the Ming and Qing dynasties, which was based on various northern dialects. It has since been extended to both Standard Chinese and related northern dialects from the 12th century to the present.^[1]

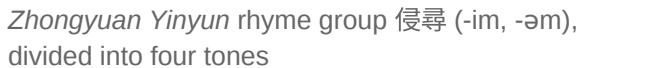
The language was called *Hàn'ér yányǔ* (漢兒言語 , "*Hàn'ér* language") or *Hànyǔ* in the Korean Chinese-language textbook *Nogeoldae*, after the name *Hàn'ér* or *Hànrén* used by the Mongols for their subjects in the northern area formerly ruled by the Jin, in contrast to *Nánrén* for those formerly under the Southern Song dynasty.^[2]

Old Mandarin	
Early Mandarin	
Region	North China Plain
Era	12th to 14th centuries
Language family	Sino-Tibetan <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sinitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mandarin<ul style="list-style-type: none">Old Mandarin
Early forms	Old Chinese <ul style="list-style-type: none">Middle Chinese
Writing system	Chinese characters, 'Phags-pa script
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	–
Glottolog	<i>None</i>
Chinese name	
Traditional Chinese	古官話
Simplified Chinese	古官话
Transcriptions	
Standard Mandarin	
Hanyu Pinyin	Gǔ Guānhuà
Early Mandarin	
Traditional Chinese	早期官話
Simplified Chinese	早期官话
Transcriptions	
Standard Mandarin	
Hanyu Pinyin	Zǎoqí Guānhuà

A side-effect of foreign rule of northern China between the 12th and 14th

The first alphabetic writing system for Chinese was created by the Tibetan

The *Menggu Ziyun* was a Chinese rime dictionary



was the *Zhongyuan Yinyun*, created by Zhōu Déqīng

A more radical departure from the rhyme table tradition was the *Zhongyuan Yinyun*, created by Zhōu Déqīng (周德清) in 1324 as a guide to the rhyming conventions of *qu*, a new vernacular verse form. The entries are grouped into 19 rhyme classes each identified by a pair of exemplary characters. The rhyme classes are subdivided by tone and then into groups of homophones, with no other indication of pronunciation. The even tone (平 *píng*) is divided in upper and lower tones called 陰平 *yīnpíng* and 陽平 *yángpíng*, respectively.^[9] Syllables in the checked tone are distributed between the other tones, but placed after the other syllables with labels such as 入聲作去聲 (*rùshēng zuò qùshēng* "entering tone makes departing tone").

Phonology

The phonology of Old Mandarin is most clearly defined in the *Zhongyuan Yinyun*. The 'Phags-pa script and the *Menggu Ziyun* tend to retain more traditional elements, but are useful in filling in the spartan description of the *Zhongyuan Yinyun*. The language shows many of the features characteristic of modern Mandarin dialects, such as the reduction and disappearance of final stop consonants and the reorganization of the Middle Chinese tones.^[7]

Initials

In Middle Chinese, initial stops and affricates showed a three-way contrast between voiceless unaspirated, voiceless aspirated and voiced consonants. The voicing distinction disappeared in most Chinese varieties, with different effects on the initials and tones in each of the major groups.^[10] In Old Mandarin, Middle Chinese voiced stops and affricates became voiceless aspirates in the "even" tone and voiceless non-aspirates in others, a typical feature of modern Mandarin varieties.^[9] This distribution is also found in Shao Yong's 11th-century rhyme tables.^[11]

With the exception of the retroflex nasal, which merged with the dental nasal, the Late Middle Chinese retroflex stops and retroflex sibilants merged into a single series.^[12]

Initials of the *Zhongyuan Yinyun*^{[13][14]}

		<u>Labial</u>	<u>Dental</u>	<u>Sibilant</u>	<u>Retroflex</u>	<u>Velar</u>
<u>Stop or affricate</u>	<u>voiceless</u>	p-	t-	ts-	tʂ-	k-
	<u>aspirate</u>	p ^h -	t ^h -	ts ^h -	tʂ ^h -	k ^h -
<u>Nasal</u>		m-	n-			ŋ-
<u>Fricative</u>		f-		s-	ʂ-	x-
<u>Approximant</u>		ʋ-	l-		ɭ-	Ø-

The initial /Ø/ denotes a voiced laryngeal onset functioning as a zero initial. It was almost in complementary distribution with the initial /ŋ/, and the two have merged in most modern dialects as a zero initial, [ŋ], [ʎ] or [n].^[15] The initial /ʋ/ has also merged with the zero initial and the /w/ medial in the standard language.^[16]

The distinction between the dental and retroflex sibilants has persisted in northern Mandarin dialects, including that of Beijing, but the two series have merged in southwestern and southeastern dialects. A more recent development in some dialects (including Beijing) is the merger of palatal allophones of dental sibilants and velars, yielding a palatal series (rendered *j-*, *q-* and *x-* in pinyin).^[17]

Finals

The Late Middle Chinese rime tables divide finals between 16 rhyme classes (*shè* 攝), each described as either "inner" (*nèi* 內) or "outer" (*wài* 外), thought to indicate a close or open vowel respectively. Each rhyme group was divided into four "divisions" (*děng* 等), crosscut with a two-way division between "open mouth" (*kāikǒu* 開口) or "closed mouth" (*hékǒu* 合口), with the latter indicating labialisation of the syllable onset.^[18]

Although these categories are coarser than the finals of the Early Middle Chinese of the *Qieyun*, they are sufficient to account for the development to Old Mandarin. The LMC divisions are reflected in Old Mandarin by variation in the vowel, as well as the presence or absence of palatalization. Palatalization and lip rounding are represented by a medial glide, as in modern varieties.^[19] Divisions III and IV are not distinguished by any of the varieties, and are marked with a palatal glide, except after retroflex initials. Palatal glides also occur in open division II syllables with velar or laryngeal initials.

For example, the rhyme classes with nasal codas yield the following Old Mandarin finals:

Old Mandarin reflexes of Late Middle Chinese rhymes with nasal codas

Rhyme class	Open				Closed			
	Div. I	Div. II	Div. III	Div. IV	Div. I	Div. II	Div. III	Div. IV
深 <i>shēn</i> ^[20]			-əm, -im ^[a]					
咸 <i>xián</i> ^[22]	-am	-jam ^[b]	-jɛm					
臻 <i>zhēn</i> ^[23]	-ən		-in		-un		-yn	
山 <i>shān</i> ^[24]	-an	-jan ^[c]	-jɛn		-wɔn	-wan	-ɥɛn	
通 <i>tōng</i> ^[26]					-uŋ		-juŋ	
曾 <i>zēng</i> ^[27]	-əŋ		-iŋ		-wəŋ		-yŋ	
梗 <i>gěng</i> ^[28]		-əŋ	-iŋ			-wəŋ	-yŋ	
宕 <i>dàng</i> ^[29]	-aŋ		-jaŋ		-waŋ		-waŋ	
江 <i>jiāng</i> ^[30]		-aŋ	-jaŋ					

The merger of the *zēng* and *gěng* rhyme classes is a characteristic feature of Mandarin dialects.^[31] That merger, and that of the *dàng* and *jiāng* classes, was already reflected in Shao Yong's 11th-century rhyme tables.^[32]

The two sources yield very similar sets of finals, though they sometimes differ in which finals were considered to rhyme:

Finals of the *Zhongyuan Yinyun* and *Menggu Ziyun*^{[33][34][35]}

<i>Zhongyuan Yinyun</i> rhyme class		Finals by medial class				<i>Menggu Ziyun</i> rhyme class	
		開口	齊齒	合口	撮口		
		-	-j-	-w-	-ɥ-		
5	魚模 <i>yú-mú</i>			-u	-y	5	魚 <i>yú</i>
12	哥戈 <i>gē-hū</i>	-ɔ	-jɔ ^[d]	-wɔ		14	哥 <i>gē</i>
14	車遮 <i>chē-zhē</i>		-jɛ ^[e]		-ɥɛ ^[e]	15	麻 <i>má</i>
13	家麻 <i>jiā-má</i>	-a	-ja	-wa			
3	支思 <i>zhī-sī</i>	-ɹ, -ʃ ^[f]				4	支 <i>zhī</i>
4	齊微 <i>qí-wēi</i>		-i	-uj			
		-əj				6	佳 <i>jiā</i>
6	皆來 <i>jiē-lái</i>	-aj	-jaɹ	-waj			
16	尤侯 <i>yóu-hóu</i>	-əw	-iw			11	尤 <i>yóu</i>
11	蕭豪 <i>xiāo-háo</i> ^[g]		-jɛw	-wɔw ^[d]		10	蕭 <i>xiāo</i>
		-aw	-jaw	-waw			
17	侵尋 <i>qīn-xún</i>	-əm	-im			13	侵 <i>qīn</i>
19	廉纖 <i>lián-xiān</i>		-jɛm			12	覃 <i>tán</i>
18	監咸 <i>yán-xián</i>	-am	-jam				
7	真文 <i>zhēn-wén</i>	-ən	-in	-un	-yn	7	真 <i>zhēn</i>
10	先天 <i>xiān-tiān</i>		-jɛn		-ɥɛn	9	先 <i>xiān</i>
9	桓歡 <i>huán-huān</i>			-wɔn		8	寒 <i>hán</i>
8	寒山 <i>hán-shān</i>	-an	-jan	-wan			
1	東鐘 <i>dōng-zhōng</i>			-uŋ	-juŋ	1	東 <i>dōng</i>
15	庚青 <i>gēng-qīng</i>	-əŋ	-iŋ	-wəŋ	-yŋ	2	庚 <i>gēng</i>
2	江陽 <i>jiāng-yáng</i>	-aŋ	-jaŋ	-waŋ		3	陽 <i>yáng</i>

In syllables with labial initials, Middle Chinese *-m* codas had already dissimilated to *-n* before the Old Mandarin period.^[20] The remaining *-m* codas merged with *-n* before the early 17th century, when the late Ming standard was described by European missionaries Matteo Ricci and Nicolas Trigault.^[40] The pairs *-uŋ/-wəŋ* and *-juŋ/-yŋ* had also merged by this time.^[41] However, the language still distinguished mid and open vowels in the pairs *-jɛw/-jaw*, *-jɛn/-jan* and *-wɔn/-wan*. For example, 官 and 關, both *guān* in the modern language, were distinguished as [kwɔn] and [kwan]. These pairs had also merged by the time of Joseph Prémare's 1730 grammar.^[42] They are still distinguished in Wu and Gan and some nearby Lower Yangtze Mandarin dialects such as the Yangzhou dialect, where they are pronounced [kuõ] and [kuẽ] respectively.^[43]

Tones

In Middle Chinese, syllables with vocalic or nasal codas could have one of three pitch contours, traditionally called "even", "rising" and "departing". Syllables ending in a stop consonant /p/, /t/ or /k/ (checked syllables) had no tonal contrasts but were traditionally treated as a separate "entering" tone category, parallel to syllables ending in nasals /m/, /n/, or /ŋ/.^[44] Syllables with voiced initials tended to be pronounced with a lower pitch, and by the late Tang dynasty, each of the tones had split into two registers conditioned by the initials. When voicing was lost in all dialect groups except Wu and Old Xiang, this distinction became phonemic.^[45]

The *Zhongyuan Yinyun* shows the typical Mandarin rearrangement of the first three tone classes into four tones:^[46]

1. the upper even tone, conditioned by Middle Chinese voiceless initials
2. the lower even tone, conditioned by Middle Chinese voiced or nasal initials
3. the rising tone (except for syllables with Middle Chinese voiced initials)
4. the departing tone, including rising tone syllables with Middle Chinese voiced initials

Checked syllables are distributed across syllables with vocalic codas in other tones determined by the Middle Chinese initial:^{[47][48][h]}

- tone 2 in syllables with voiced obstruent initials
- tone 3 in syllables with voiceless initials except the glottal stop
- tone 4 in syllables with sonorant or glottal stop initials

Such syllables are placed after others of the same tone in the dictionary, perhaps to accommodate Old Mandarin dialects in which former checked syllables retained a final glottal stop as in modern northwestern and southeastern dialects.^[49]

Vocabulary

The flourishing vernacular literature of the period also shows distinctively Mandarin vocabulary and syntax, though some, such as the third-person pronoun *tā* (他), can be traced back to the Tang dynasty.^[50]

Notes

- a. -əm occurs only after retroflex initials.^[21]
- b. -jam occurs only in syllables with Middle Chinese velar and laryngeal initials.^[22]
- c. -jan occurs only in syllables with Middle Chinese velar and laryngeal initials.^[25]
- d. This final occurs in the *Zhongyuan Yinyun* but not in 'Phags-pa.^[34]
- e. Palatalization was lost after retroflex initials, so -jɛ and -ɟɛ become -ɛ and -wɛ after retroflex initials.^[36]
- f. ʈ following dental sibilants, ʈ following retroflex sibilants^[37]
- g. The additional vowels in this rhyme group may reflect contrasts in Zhou Deqing's speech that were no longer distinguished in rhyming practice.^{[38][39]}
- h. This differs somewhat from the standard language, in which syllables with Middle Chinese voiceless initials are distributed across tones 1, 3 and 4 without pattern.

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4. Pulleyblank (1999), p. 125.
5. Norman (1988), pp. 49–50.
6. Coblin (2006), pp. 1–3.
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9. Norman (1988), p. 49.
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12. Pulleyblank (1984), pp. 65, 69.
13. Norman (1988), p. 50, based on Dong (1954).
14. Pulleyblank (1991), pp. 7–8.
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16. Hsueh (1975), p. 38.
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46. Pulleyblank (1978), p. 192.
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48. Pulleyblank (1991), p. 10.
49. Stimson (1977), p. 943.
50. Norman (1988), pp. 111–132.

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External links

- BabelStone: Phags-pa Script (<http://www.babelstone.co.uk/Phags-pa/index.html>), by Andrew West.
 - *Zhongyuan Yinyun* at the Internet Archive: part 1 (<https://archive.org/details/06070429.cn>) and part 2 (<https://archive.org/details/06070430.cn>).
 - *Zhongyuan Yinyun* (<http://ctext.org/library.pl?if=en&res=6908>), at the Chinese Text Project.
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